

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 08873 250213Z

61

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7366

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 8873

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: MORALES BERMUDEZ AND THE LEFTIST CHALLENGE

1. STUDENT GROUPS WERE COALESCING IN DOWNTOWN LIMA OCTOBER 24 AS COORDINATED DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISTURBANCES WENT INTO POSSIBLE THIRD DAY. THE GUARDIA CIVIL CLASHED WITH AND DISPERSED STUDENT GROUPS THROUGHOUT OCTOBER 23. MILITANT TEACHERS UNION (SUTEP) HELD ASSEMBLY EVENING OF OCTOBER 23 TO PROTEST POLICE "REPRESSION" (RUMORS OF STUDENT DEATHS ARE CIRCULATING) AND TO ORGANIZE RESPONSE.

2. MEANWHILE SOUTHERN PERU COPPER CORPORATION'S TOQUEPALA UNION THREATENED ANOTHER STRIKE BEGINNING OCTOBER 27 UNLESS NEW LABOR MINISTER GALINDO RECEIVED UNION DELEGATION AND RESOLVED THEIR PROBLEMS. THE CENTROMIN MINERS FEDERATION, WHICH "SUSPENDED" ITS STRIKE OCTOBER 20, HAS ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE CALLING FOR COORDINATED LABOR ACTION IN DEFENSE OF THE TOQUEPALA UNION. WITH UNFORTUNATE TIMING NORTHERN PERU MINING CORPORATION PLANS TO DISMISS 650 WORKERS AS PART OF AN AGREEMENT WITH GOP ON TRANSFER OF THIS OPERATION TO THE MINING COMMUNITY. THE APRISTA CTP WHICH HAS NOT BEEN PRONE TO STRIKE IN RECENT PAST IS EXPECTING TO REACT; IN FACT A CTP PLENARY SESSION OCTOBER 23 CONSIDERED CALLING A GENERAL STRIKE. NORTHERN PERU WORKERS ARE TO MEET AT MINE AT 5:00 P.M. TODAY (OCT. 24).

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PAGE 02 LIMA 08873 250213Z

3. STUDENT AGITATION AND CONTINUED LABOR UNREST COMES AT A TIME OF CABINET CHANGES STEMMING FROM AIR FORCE SHAKE-UP. SOME GOVERNMENT MINISTERS IN MORALES BERMUDEZ REGIME ARE POLITICALLY INEXPERIENCED AND MAY BE ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTY IN COPING WITH FAST BREAKING, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED EVENTS. THERE IS SOME QUIET CRITICISM IN MILITARY CIRCLES OF MORALES BERMUDEZ HIMSELF. SOME SAY HE IS LESS DECISIVE THAN EXPECTED AND HIS PRUDENCE CAN BE INTERPRETED AS WEAKNESS. ONE MILITARY SOURCE IN THE RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA CAMP IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF STATED THAT MORALES BERMUDEZ WAS NOT YET "WELL-SEATED" IN HIS PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR.

4. EVENTS OF PAST FEW WEEKS IN LABOR AND STUDENT AREA SEEM TO POINT TO COORDINATED FAR-LEFT CAMPAIGN INTENDED TO TEST MORALES BERMUDEZ REGIME (PERUVIAN COMMUNIST PARTY IS NOT VISIBLY INVOLVED AND HAS EVEN CONDEMNED FAR-LEFT EFFORTS TO "SABOTAGE" REGIME). SHOULD GOP ENGAGE IN CRACKDOWN, FAR LEFT WOULD CLAIM TO HAVE DEMONSTRATED GOVERNMENT'S REPRESSIVE AND DICTATORIAL NATURE. IF GOP DOES NOT ACT, THEN FAR LEFT CAN BE EXPECTED TO STEP UP ITS DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITIES.

5. GOP SO FAR HAS RESPONDED WITH SOME CAUTION. IT HAS DECLARED STRIKES ILLEGAL BUT HAS NOT USED FORCE TO BREAK THEM, PREFERRING TO DECREE SETTLEMENTS AND THEN OUTWAIT STRIKERS. STREET DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN MET WITH SUFFICIENT FORCE BUT WITHOUT BRUTAL REPRESSION. WHETHER THIS POLICY SUCCEEDS DEPENDS ON OPPOSITION GROUPS THEMSELVES AND ON ABILITY OF MORALES BERMUDEZ TO CONTINUE MILITARY UNITY IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGE. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE CAN DO SO.
DEAN

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